Relationship among the Parenting Styles and the Social Competence and Prosocial Behaviors of the Children Who are Attending to State and Private Preschools *

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the associations of social competence and prosocial behaviors of the boys and girls who are attending to private or state preschools with the parenting styles of mothers' perception. Participants of the research were 344 children's (ranging from 35 and 75 months of age) teachers and mothers. These children were attending to preschools located in Ankara. In this research Parenting Styles and Dimension Scales and Prosocial Behavior Scale were applied to the mothers, Teacher Rating Scales for Social Competence and Prosocial Behavior Scale were applied to the teachers. Findings revealed that the girls have positive interactions with their peers and teachers more than the boys do and the boys have negative interactions with their peers more than the girls do. Furthermore, the scores of negative interactions with peers of the children who have authoritative parents were higher than those of the children who have permissive parents. In addition, the scores of negative interactions with peers and noninteraction behaviors of the children attending to a private preschool were higher than that of the children attending to a state preschool. Moreover, in terms of both mother and teacher ratings of prosocial behaviors, girls tend to show more prosocial behaviors than boys. The children whose mothers showing authoritative parenting style demonstrate more prosocial behaviors as rated by mothers than the children whose parents showing permissive parenting styles.

Key Words

Loneliness, Gender, Sex Roles, Attachment.

This study investigated the differences between social competence and prosocial behaviors of the preschoolers having mothers with different par-

enting styles. Socially competent behavior reflects effective social interactions such as getting along well with others, initiating play, entering play, and resolving conflict with peers. Prosocial behavior which is one of the behavioral dimensions of social competence, is defined as voluntary action intented to benefit the others (Schneider, 1993). Parental influence on a child's social competence within peer groups has been investigated for a long time. Many previous studies have focused on authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles and their associations with several measures of child competence (Baumrind, 1971; Bilgin, 1996; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Diener & Kim, 2004; Güre, Wissink, & Dekovic, 2010; Gürşimşek, 2003; Howes & Smith, 1995; Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997; Le Compte, Le Compte, & Özer, 1978; Ladd & Ladd, 1998; Lindah, 1998; Maccoby & Martin,

1983; Micozkadıoğlu & Berument, 2003; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, 1993; Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002; Russel, Hart, Robinson, & Olsen, 2003; Karadayı, 1994; Öztürk, 1990; Savaşır, Sezgin, & Erol, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Şendoğdu, 2000; Sümer & Güngör, 1999; Tuzgöl, 1998; Yağmurlu, Sanson, & Köymen, 2005; Yıldız, 2004; Yılmaz, 2001).

Several researchers have found that preschool children who witnessed authoritative parenting style had higher social competence (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Frailigh, 1988; Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen, & McNeilly-Choque, 1998; Patterson & Sanson, 1999; Russel et al., 1998; Snyder, Stoolmiller, Wilson, & Yamamoto, 2003). On the other hand, the parents who show authoritarian parenting style make their children have hostile behaviors (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Benzies, Keown, & Magill-Evans, 2009; Chen, Li, Li, Li, & Liu, 2000; Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009; Huntsinger & Rose, 2009). Social competence's and prosocial behaviors' relationship with the parenting style change according to the parents' or the child's sex (Hart et al., 1998; Ladd & Ladd, 1998; Rose-Krasnor, 1997). In these studies, it was found that fathers' authoritarian style is a better predictor of the children's hostile behaviors; the girls' social competence scores are higher than the boys, and the girls tend to show less aggressive behavior than the boys (Hart et al., 1998; Russel et al., 1998).

In our country there are only a few researches investigating the relationship between the parenting styles and social competence and the parenting styles and prosocial behaviors. The results of these studies are not in aggrement with each other. Some researchers indicated that the social competence and prosocial behaviors are not related with the parenting style (Beğeç, 1990; Gürşimşek, 2003; Tokol, 1996). On the other hand, others showed that the mothers' authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with prosocial behaviors (Öğretir, 1999; Yağmurlu et al., 2005). In the related literature, quality of care was also found to be an important predictor of child outcomes. Although there isn't any research examining the effects of type of day care centers (state or private) on child outcomes, a research investigated the influence of specific quality indicators of day care centers (teacher-child ratio, group size, square footage per child, characteristics of the activities which were picture book reading, educational activities) on the social competence of day care children (Micozkadıoğlu & Berument, 2003).

In the literature, typically children's competence is measured through standardized tests, parent or teacher ratings or behavioral observations. So, in the current study children's social competence was measured by teacher ratings, while prosocial behavior was measured through both teacher and mother ratings. Overall, the main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of parenting style on the social competence and prosocial behaviors of preschoolers. The aim of the research was to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between the social competence of the boys and the girls due to type of preschool and parenting style of mother?

2. Are there any significant differences between the mother ratings of prosocial behaviors of the boys and the girls due to type of preschool and parenting style of mother?

3. Are there any significant differences between the teacher ratings of prosocial behaviors of the boys and the girls due to type of preschool and parenting style of mother?

Method

Participants

Participants were mothers (M =35.74 years) and teachers (M = 28.30 years) of 344 children enrolled in state and private preschools in Ankara. 176 of the children were girls, and 168 of them were boys ranging from 3 to 5 years of age (M = 60.80, SD = 8.35). The education periods of the participating mothers varied between 5 and 21 years and their average length of education was 14.21 years. All of the participating teachers were women, the length of teachers' working period varied between 1 and 25 years and the average period was 8.56 years. Maternal education and teachers' working period (highly correlated with social competence and prosocial behaviors) have been controlled statistically.

Instruments

Parenting Styles and Dimension Scales (Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, & Hart 2001): The Scale

includes of 32 items and consists of 3 dimensions which are authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. As a result of the factor analyses, it was found that it consists of its original dimensions (Altay, 2007). In the current study authoritative ($α = .86$) and permissive ($α = .68$) sub scales were used

Teacher Rating Scales for Social Competence (Micozkadıoğlu & Berument, 2003): This scale rated by teachers includes 17 items and consists of 4 dimensions. Teachers assessed positive interactions with peers and teacher, negative interactions with peers, negative interactions with teacher, and noninteractions.

Prosocial Behavior Scale (Iannotti, 1985; Wilby, 2003; Yağmurlu et al., 2005)**:** The scale evaluated by the teachers and the mothers consists of 19 items comprised 4 items for helping, 6 for sharing, 5 for comforting and 4 for cooperating. The teacher and mother rated each behavior in the questionnaire twice: Once as it happened spontaneously (without being asked), and once when asked by the teacher. Standardized scores for the subscales were averaged to provide a composite measure of prosocial behaviors.

Results

Results Related with Teacher Ratings of Social Competence

The differences between gender, the type of the pre-school, and mothers self reported parenting styles were examined by 2x2x2 multiple covariance analysis. Teachers' length of working period was entered as a covariate. Both the gender ($F_{4,330} = 3.856$, $p < .05$, Eta² $= .045$) and the parenting styles ($F_{8,660} = 1.953$, $p < .05$, Eta² $=.023$) have significant effects on the social competence. Further analysis revealed that gender have significant effect on the positive interactions with the peers and the teachers ($F_{4,343} = 6.407$, $p < .05$, Eta² $= .019$) and the negative interactions with the peers ($F_{4,343} = 16.916$, $p < .05$, Eta² $= .048$). According to the results, the girls have more positive interactions with the peers and the teachers ($M = 44.00$) than the boys ($M = 42.02$) do, and the boys have negative interactions with their peers ($M = 4.21$) more than the girls do ($M = 3.34$). Furthermore, the scores of negative interactions with peers of the children who have authoritative parents ($M = 3.84$) are higher than that of the children who have permissive parents ($M = 3.71$) ($F_{1,343} =$

3.655, $p < .05$, Eta² $= .022$). Finally, it was found that type of school have significant effect on the negative interactions with peers ($F_{1,343} = 3.41$, $p < .05$, Eta² $= .019$) and noninteractions ($F_{1,343} = 3.846$, $p < .05$, Eta² $=.011$). The children attending to a private school got higher points from the negative interactions with peers ($M = 3.93$) and noninteractios ($M = 6.58$) than the children attending to a state school ($M = 3.63$) ($M= 6.37$), accordingly.

Results Related with Prosocial Behaviors

In order to answer the second question, the effect of gender, the type of the preschool and the parenting styles on the prosocial behavior were examined by the 2 X 2 X 2 analysis of covariance. The prosocial behavior of the children was reported by the teacher and the mothers. In this analysis, mothers' length of education and length of working period for teachers were entered as covariates. For mothers, gender ($F_{1,343} = 7.85$; $p<.05$, Eta² $= .023$) and the parenting style ($F_{1,343} = 4.60$; $p<.05$, Eta² $=.014$) have significant effects on the prosocial behavior. The girls' scores of prosocial behavior ($M = 4.92$) are higher than that of the boys' ($M = 4.63$). In addition, the children whose mothers having authoritative parenting style showed more prosocial behaviors ($M = 4.89$) than the children ($M = 4.63$) whose parents showing permissive parenting styles.

Results for teacher ratings of prosocial behavior revealed that gender have significant effect on prosocial behaviors ($F_{1,343} = 10.031$; $p<.05$, Eta² $= .029$). The girls' scores of prosocial behaviors ($M= 4.51$) are higher than of the boys' ($M= 5.33$).

Discussion

Findings of the gender differences in terms of social competence and prosocial behaviors were consistent with the previous research indicating that girls were more socially competent and tend to show more prosocial behaviors than boys (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Benzies et al., 2009; Fagot & Leve, 1998; Hart et al., 1998; Hoffman, 1979; Jewell, Krohn, Scott, Carlton, & Meinz, 2009; Laibe, Carlo, Torquati, & Ontai, 2004; Öğretir, 1999; Yağmurlu et al., 2005). Girls share their belongings with their peers, cooperate with them, and relieve them more often than the boys do. On the other hand, boys show physical and verbal violence to their peers

(Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Denham et al., 2003; Fagot & Leve, 1998; Hart et al.1998; Laibe et al.; Öğretir, 1999; Yağmurlu et al., 2005). Given that children acquire gender-role stereotypes at an early age and that early gender stereotypes include ideas about appropriate personality and behavior, there may be different correlates of social competence for boys and girls. For example, boys are expected to be more physically active, dominant, and aggressive than girls, whereas girls are expected to be more helpful than boys. In our culture, during the socialization process, boys' behaviors are not restricted and they get more freedom, and they are more oriented to the violent games and behaviors. Besides, teachers evaluation indicated hat girls play with their peers, show them love, help them, be respectful to their teachers and love them and join the activities more often than boys do. As a result, in addition to biological differences between boys and girls, they also differ from each other in terms of their socialisation process (Diener & Kim, 2004; Martin, 1995).

In the current study, the parenting style differences in terms of prosocial behaviors reported by mothers were also examined. Confirming the findings of related literature, the children whose mothers showing authoritative parenting style showed more prosocial behaviors than the children whose parents showing permissive parenting styles (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Eisenberg et al., 1996; Fabes, Eisenberg, Nyman, Bernzweig, & Pinuelas, 1994; Guajardo, Snyder, & Petersen, 2009; Laibe et al., 2004; Mussen & Eisenberg, 2001; Öğretir, 1999; Yağmurlu et al., 2005). In contrast to the results reported by the mothers, teachers ratings of prosocial behaviors were not found to be different in terms of parenting styles. The teachers may evaluate the prosocial behaviours more objectively than the mothers do. Besides, it is the fact that there may be differences between the evaluation of the mothers and the teachers (Dalgan, 1998; Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Laibe et al., 2004; Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino, 2005; Yağmurlu et al. 2005). On the other hand, findings related to teacher ratings of children's social competence showed that there were differences between the parenting styles of the mothers. These results indicated that the children whose parents show authoritative parenting style have more negative relationships with their peers (physical and verbal aggressiveness) than the children whose parents

show permissive parenting style. This result which is not consistent with the widespread research findings is difficult to interpret (Ladd & Golter, 1998; Querido et al., 2002). As a consequence, in the future research the social competence reported by the peers and the teachers would be examined in terms of parenting styles.

Furthermore, an important finding of the current study was that the children who attend to a private preschool show more aggressive behaviors to their peers than the children attending to a state preschool do. Similar to our finding, in a research done recently in our country, it was found that as the square footage per child increased, negative interactions with peers also increased (Micozkadıoğlu & Berument, 2003). These researchers assert that the reason for this could be that although some day care centers had large classes showing adequate space for each child but there were not sufficient play materials. If so the larger the area the children have, the more negative relationships are shown. However, our result is not consistent with the findings asserting that schools' high quality (teacher-child ratio, group size, characteristics of the activities which were picture book reading, educational activities, and other activities) affects the social competence of the children positively (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992; Howes & Smith, 1995; Micozkadıoğlu & Berument, 2003).

There are some limitations of this study. Cross-sectional nature of this research is one of the limitations of this study. Second, the social competence of the preschool children was only evaluated by teachers and prosocial behaviors were evaluated by teachers and mothers. Including fathers' reports of children's behavior would have strengthened the design of the study. Finally, the high rates of authoritative and permissive parenting styles that were identified in this study present only one aspect of the parenting styles of mothers. Although the overall authoritative and permissive parenting styles were examined in the present study, the specific subscales of parenting (i.e. warmth, regulation, and autonomy support) should be further examined with regard to specific predictors and child outcomes. Despite these limitations, the current study revealed a number of interesting relationships between parenting and child behaviour. The current study also points to some important directions for future research. In this respect, the

quality of the preschool, the relationship between the child and the parents, and the effect of them on children's social and cognitive development should be taken into consideration while doing an expansive research. Furthermore, it might be worthwhile to validate the findings of our study in other cultural and social settings. It is expected that the findings of these research will contribute to social policies.

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